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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Prevention of armed conflict

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support: causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Summary report on the 2012 parliamentary hearing

Note by the President of the General Assembly

The present document contains a summary of the 2012 parliamentary hearing, which is circulated pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/24.

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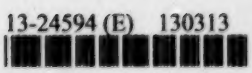

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Parliamentary hearing at the United Nations: summary and main conclusions

1. The 2012 parliamentary hearing was held at United Nations Headquarters on 6 and 7 December. It was organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office of the President of the General Assembly and brought together nearly 200 members of parliament from 55 countries to discuss the theme "A road less travelled: Parliamentary approaches to conflict prevention, reconciliation, and peacebuilding".[1] The purpose of the hearing was to establish the role that parliaments can and often do play in the various stages of conflict and post-conflict management, against the backdrop of the work of the United Nations as the premier global organization mandated to deal with such issues.[2]

2. The present report reflects the main findings of the hearing with regard to the role that national parliaments, the United Nations and other organizations can play in conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding, highlighting institutional challenges as well as appropriate and effective approaches to those processes.[3]

Examining the concepts: conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding

3. The United Nations plays a crucial role in preventing conflict and building stable societies. Since the 1990s, the number of violent conflicts has declined by 40 per cent, due partially to the engagement of the international community.

4. National ownership increases the chances of successful conflict resolution followed by a stable and lasting peace. To that end, parliaments play a crucial role in their function as the main legislative body that establishes the legal framework for the implementation of peace agreements, oversees executive action and serves as the essential bridge between the people and the executive. Conflicts all too often occur in countries with weak parliaments, and conflict situations tend to further weaken existing parliamentary structures. Thus, effective conflict management regularly requires measures to strengthen parliament.

5. Conflict management entails three different processes: conflict prevention, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. Conflict prevention refers to action that addresses the threat of the imminent eruption of violence in societies in which conflict is lingering, and triggers — such as irregular elections — that may lead to violence or its recurrence. Reconciliation refers to the process of rebuilding trust among the people through measures such as truth and reconciliation commissions, tribunals and awareness-raising. Peacebuilding entails a multifaceted and integrated approach to institution-building, development and other aspects that must normally go hand-in-hand in order to secure stability in the long term.

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[1] See annex I for an overview of the topics that were discussed during the two-day event and the list of participants.

[2] Given the complex nature of the United Nations, the hearing did not dwell in any detail on the roles played by the various departments, funds and programmes in support of these efforts. For instance, while some references were made to United Nations peacekeeping missions, the hearing did not examine the work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

[3] The hearing experimented with different debate formats in order to facilitate greater interaction between participants and the audience. A full summary of the findings of the round-table discussions of members of parliament on issues that were addressed during the two-day hearing is provided in annex II.

6. These three different processes are not necessarily consecutively applied, and often they are interlinked. There is also considerable overlap between them in terms of the tools and approaches that can be utilized. However, for the purpose of understanding the different roles that parliaments and the international community can play in this domain, both individually and as partners, the three processes are examined in the present report as separate concepts.

I. Conflict prevention

7. Conflict can exist in all societies, and it can be beneficial when it helps society evolve. Conflict over unequal access to political, social or economic resources, for example, can lead to measures that create more equal societies and thus provide the basis for more stable peace in the long run. However, conflict becomes problematic when institutions do not provide a platform for inclusive dialogue. Under those circumstances, triggers such as election irregularities can lead to the eruption of violence. Thus, conflict prevention mechanisms are not necessarily meant to stem conflict per se, but rather to prevent societal tensions from erupting into violence.

8. Violent conflict erupts when weak institutions are unable to manage the underlying inequalities and marginalization of ethnic and religious groups. In many cases, violence is triggered by events during the election cycle. Other triggers include competition over natural resources, as well as the spillover effects of conflicts in neighbouring countries, which can lead to an influx of easily available weapons. Examples of weak institutions were examined over the two-day hearing: political institutions that fail to establish effective mechanisms for checks and balances; weak political parties, which ultimately lead to political, social and economic inequality, politically biased electoral commissions and civil society institutions and media that are not truly independent.

9. The United Nations has several means through which it can assist in conflict prevention if all parties to the conflict display the political will needed to find a solution. Being perceived as a neutral entity, the United Nations is well equipped to provide a platform for inclusive dialogue. The promise of an inclusive solution is often a precondition for parties to the conflict to agree to sit around the negotiating table in the first place. However, some participants warned that the inclusion of all parties to the conflict, irrespective of their agenda, can delegitimize the process. In practical terms, the United Nations can promote inclusiveness in its support to peace processes, in particular in countries where it has deployed peacekeeping or political field missions. It can help facilitate negotiated settlements of conflict through United Nations-led mediation efforts. It can also help strengthen existing electoral institutions in order to prevent unnecessary delays and build trust among the general public in institutions such as electoral commissions. Furthermore, the United Nations can help prevent conflict by reducing the number of readily available weapons, as it did successfully in Côte d'Ivoire. Another way in which the United Nations can minimize the risk of violent conflict is by training national and communal negotiators and by sensitizing the police service, as was effectively done in Kenya.

> There is no magic formula and in most cases the failure of prevention is attributable to the lack of political will of those in conflict.
>
> Tayé-Brook Zerihoun
> Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs

10. The greatest challenge to conflict prevention is to ensure timely responses in order to provide a platform for dialogue before the outbreak of violence. Once violence has erupted, stabilizing society becomes much more challenging. United Nations intervention in the three cases that were examined in detail over the two days — conflict prevention in Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire and reconciliation and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone — was successful when it was timely and well thought out in advance.

11. In other cases, such as the current situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, delayed action by the United Nations has called into question the ability of the international community to respond effectively to such crises. This is seen most clearly through the action — or inaction — of the Security Council, whose decision-making structure can sometimes lead to decisions that are motivated by the political concerns of some members as opposed to the actual needs and the best interest of the countries (see box 1 below). The United Nations as a whole is diminished every time it fails to respond to a crisis because of the opposition of some Member States that are motivated by their own interests.

Box 1

Would a more inclusive membership of the Security Council lead to greater global stability?

The issue of Security Council reform as a basis for more democratic and effective decision-making was a recurring theme during the two-day hearing. On the second day, a special debate was held to further examine the critical issue of Council reform. The debate revolved around the question of whether a more inclusive membership of the Council would lead to greater global stability, and helped elucidate some of the reasons why such reform has yet to materialize. The current structure of the Council does not reflect present-day realities and lacks the necessary checks and balances. The number of Member States has increased from 51 when the Charter of the United Nations was signed in 1945 to 193 today. In all, 85 per cent of the cases that are discussed in the Council are in the African region, yet there is no single permanent African member on the Council. The debate then shifted to the concept of inclusiveness. Is inclusiveness achieved simply by increasing the number of Member States and by expanding geographic representation in the Council? Or can inclusivity be achieved by making the Council's working methods more transparent and accountable? Evidently, an increase in the number of Member States should not be proportional to the increase of Member States since 1945, which would render the Council ineffective as an executive body of the United Nations. Increasing, the number of permanent members may only solidify the current structure of privileges

(e.g. veto power). Instead, greater inclusivity might be achieved through more appropriate representation of the different regions of the world. Reform of the Council's working methods may lead to more inclusive cooperation and, ultimately, more inclusive outcomes. According to one proposal, the five permanent members should adopt commitments that include abiding by international law, not using their veto in certain cases such as genocide and not sanctioning pre-emptive strikes. Another proposal was that membership of the non-permanent members of the Council should not be limited to one term but should be open to re-election. In this way, the actions of Member States will be scrutinized and members will be encouraged to act in such a way as to fulfil the mandate of the Council. Ultimately, in order to achieve Council reform through an amendment to the Charter, two thirds of the world's parliaments will have to ratify it.

12. In order to facilitate timely preventive action, the United Nations has established a regional political presence in three regions — Central Asia, Central Africa and West Africa — to monitor developments and build anticipatory relationships with key regional stakeholders. Through its presence in fragile regions, the United Nations can facilitate a regional approach to conflict management.

13. Countries in the region tend to have a better understanding of local conflict dynamics and are often better placed to influence their course.

14. It should be noted that the impact of conflict prevention is often difficult to measure and rarely receives the attention that the failure to prevent or resolve conflict does. This is due to a number of reasons, including the fact that conflict prevention often entails closed-door negotiations and that conflicts that have not erupted into violence rarely receive the same level of attention as those that have turned violent. The case of Kenya, where international intervention helped stop the violence that erupted immediately after the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, represents one of the few instances in which the involvement of the international community was well publicized and acknowledged.

Parliament's role in conflict prevention

15. Where parliamentarians have established strong relations with their constituents, parliaments are well equipped to identify lingering and emerging grievances. As a result, parliamentarians can act as mediators for preventing conflict in a number of ways. Through ongoing communication with their constituents, parliamentarians can identify issues that need to be addressed in order to prevent conflict, such as a sense of relative deprivation and lack of representation. For example, a recent mission dispatched by the Kenyan Parliament to an area that had experienced political violence found that the violence had been an expression of the frustration of one ethnic group that felt underrepresented in parliament. At the same time, parliamentarians can educate their constituents on measures taken to address existing grievances. Lastly, by opening parliamentary debates to the public and demonstrating parliamentary cooperation, constituents can be reassured that their concerns are addressed on the political level. This was the case, for example, in

Mali, where the current conflict would likely have occurred earlier if the parliament had not actively reached out to the leaders of the Tuareg people.

16. Furthermore, parliaments can help build trust in national institutions in order to encourage parties to a conflict to use these institutions as a way of finding solutions to the conflict. Parliaments can build trust by effectively fighting corruption inside and outside parliament. Building trust in parliament as an institution is a prerequisite for parliaments to play an effective role in conflict prevention. In the case of Kenya, for example, the level of trust in parliament during and immediately after the conflict that broke out following the election results of 2007 had been extremely low, and the parliament could play an effective role only once it had regained the trust of the people. Furthermore, parliaments can strengthen their oversight of the executive by, inter alia, decentralizing decision-making processes and taking the necessary measures to ensure that they remain independent of the executive.

> We should not fear debate. It's the lack of debate that we should fear.
>
> Guillaume Kigbafori Soro
> President of the National Assembly, Côte d'Ivoire

Recommendations

17. The recommendations are as follows:

(a) Member States and their parliaments should support and further invest in United Nations conflict-prevention efforts and capacities and equip the Organization with timely and predictable financial support;

(b) Preventive efforts should place added focus on strengthening existing national institutions and conflict-resolution capacities in order to ensure a lasting peace and avoid a situation where the Organization at best manages rather than resolves conflict;

(c) While the first interlocutor of the United Nations must necessarily be the Government, its work can also benefit from engagement with parliament. In cases where parliamentarians have established close relations with their constituents, parliaments are well equipped to monitor lingering and rising tensions in society before violence even erupts. Moreover, the eruption of violence may be prevented by allowing societal tensions to turn into parliamentary debates;

(d) Parliaments need to undergo reform in order to build trust in the institution as an effective mechanism for conflict management. Such reform should lead to greater transparency and inclusiveness.

II. Reconciliation

18. Once violence has erupted, reconciliation measures become necessary. Reconciliation is the first necessary step towards a lasting peace and always entails deep psychological changes among people who have been in conflict. It is a learning

process that allows people to move on from the past, learn to trust each other again and work together for a better future.

19. Failure to achieve reconciliation often results in distrust among the different groups, which can linger for generations. The nature and underlying causes of conflict can change over time, making it more difficult to solve the conflict in the long run. In such cases, conflict cannot be solved but only managed so as to prevent the outbreak of violence. There are many examples of situations where conflicts are prolonged because people are not given the opportunity to reconcile, for example, Cyprus.

20. Reconciliation does not happen by itself. It is a process that requires unwavering political will and strong leadership through proactive measures such as education and dialogue in order to overcome the distrust within society. Political leaders need to rely on cooperation with civil society in order to effectively reach the grass-roots level and, ultimately, foster active participation of the people.

21. In cases where distrust is still rife, nationally organized mechanisms may initially lack credibility. In such circumstances, the United Nations is well equipped to help establish reconciliation mechanisms such as truth and reconciliation commissions and criminal justice tribunals. The United Nations is in a position to use the norms established by the international community in order to find common ground on which reconciliation among the people can occur.

22. International reconciliation mechanisms may be ineffective if the general public does not consider the outcome as fair. The perception of fairness requires that the decision-making structures — on both the national and international levels — are transparent and clearly acting in the best interest of all concerned. Unfortunately, and as mentioned before, many people perceive United Nations interventions as prone to be driven by the political interests of a few Member States. At the same time, international justice systems may cause resentment at home if the principle of the presumption of innocence of those indicted is not respected.

Parliament's role in reconciliation

23. Parliaments play a crucial role in this area first and foremost by approving peace settlements considered to be just and fair and by helping to ensure that the executive pursues effective reconciliation measures. Parliaments can also enact legislation to give effect to reconciliation, including the establishment of truth and reconciliation mechanisms at home. Another important role of parliamentarians is to make sure that constituents are engaged in the reconciliation process through proactive measures and by sharing relevant information. Such measures were an important step towards reconciliation in Kenya, where the parliament went to great lengths to ensure the involvement of civil society in debates on reform and greater levels of transparency in parliamentary processes.

> Parliamentary governance is by nature collegial. Where the executive has difficulties in entering into discussions or dialogue with the opposition, the collegial manner in which parliament is managed facilitates dialogue.
>
> Mélégué Traoré
> Member of Parliament, Burkina Faso

Recommendations

24. The recommendations are as follows:

(a) International reconciliation mechanisms need to be perceived as fair and not seen as measures that are arbitrarily applied to some countries while not at all to others. This entails democratizing the decision-making structures of the United Nations, including the Security Council;

(b) Parliaments need to ensure that their constituents are involved in the debate on how to achieve reconciliation and are aware of the measures being taken.

III. Peacebuilding

25. Peacebuilding requires a long-term engagement to address the root causes of the original conflict, which must invariably start by building and strengthening the institutions of government and civil society. If the root causes are not addressed, violence is likely to recur. Addressing the root causes of conflict is not an easy undertaking, which is evident in the fact that, according to the *World Development Report 2011*, 90 per cent of the last decade's civil wars occurred in countries that had already had a civil war in the last 30 years.

> Parliament is not just about making laws. It can also hold the public administration to account and help ensure that limited national resources are put to optimum use so that services effectively reach the population.
>
> Abdelwahad Radi
> President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

26. Lasting peace cannot be achieved without establishing a social contract between the State and the people. With a social contract in place — that is, when there is a reciprocal and interdependent relationship between the State and all of its citizens, irrespective of their ethnic and local backgrounds, gender or other factors — individuals feel a common bond of rights and responsibilities to one another. With a social contract in place, citizens know that they will not be excluded from the benefits of a stronger State and that State instability may deprive them as individuals. The ensuing sense of belonging to a given society is important to make people more inclined to pursue and defend the peace.

> What goes into building a social contract is inclusive political processes, for which parliaments are key, along with legitimate politics and representation. There have to be resilient State-society relations, the State has to provide services and there have to be responsive State institutions.
>
> Marta Ruedas
> Deputy Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery,
> United Nations Development Programme

27. The United Nations can play an important role in building such societies. Currently, a total of 15 peacekeeping and 14 field-based political missions are working on the ground to help fragile post-conflict societies pursue the necessary reforms to establish a social contract on their own. In addition, the Peacebuilding Commission, established in 2005 (together with the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund), can aid fragile countries in finding effective strategies to help build and strengthen existing institutions, create an environment that is conducive to reconciliation and aid economic development in order to minimize the causes of conflict. Respecting the principle of national ownership, the Peacebuilding Commission works in close cooperation with Governments to help identify key policy priorities and the financial resources needed to implement necessary reforms to address the root causes of conflict through integrated measures that include, among other things, economic reform.[4] Economic reforms that target growth and social justice are crucial to successful peacebuilding insofar as they have a concrete and positive impact on people's lives.

> When we focus only on specific conflicts that have broken out and then we try to focus on issues that deal directly with the conflict, like demobilization and reintegration, the focus becomes very male-centric. Because who bears the arms? It is not women. When you are building the peace you are only dealing with the manifestation of violent conflict and you are not dealing with the social issues, and you can only deal with those issues if everyone is part of the debate.
>
> Saraswathi Menon
> Director, Policy Division, UN-Women

28. The effective involvement of the United Nations in peacebuilding requires a clear mandate that is communicated to and accepted by the people. In some cases, the presence of a United Nations mission may raise false hopes of security if it does not have a clear mandate to respond to violent conflict and other threats. This failure to act can deepen existing problems. Similarly, when the United Nations commits to intervening, it needs to ensure that the requisite financial resources and troops are provided in order to fulfil its mandate. Furthermore, the United Nations mission

[4] Currently, the Peacebuilding Commission has six country configurations: Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

needs to commit to staying on until there is clear evidence that the peace agreement is sustainable.

Role of Parliament in peacebuilding

29. The successful implementation of peace agreements depends on the parliament's ability to enact enabling legislation. In the case of Kenya, Parliament took an active role in the implementation of the peace agreement and in building institutions that aim for long-term stability. Among other things, the Parliament passed the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Act, which paved the way for the appointment of the members of the relevant Commission; it reformed its own internal processes, adopting new standing orders to allow, inter alia, for equal opportunity; and it introduced live broadcasting of its proceedings in order to enhance transparency and people's trust in parliament.

30. Parliaments as institutions can contribute to stable and lasting peace by strengthening dialogue and giving a voice to marginalized groups. The inclusion of marginalized groups in the political process is crucial to ensuring that new or re-emerging grievances about the unfair redistribution of resources or discriminatory treatment by the law, to mention just a few, can be addressed. The various measures available to parliaments include improving the representation of minority groups, passing laws that promote human rights and examining appropriation bills (through the budget process) with a view to achieving equity and social justice. All of this will go a long way in strengthening the social contract between the State and the people, considered a pillar of peace and stability.

Recommendations

31. The recommendations are as follows:

(a) To be effective, the United Nations must be backed up by adequate financial and human resources. Hopes that cannot be fulfilled must not be raised;

(b) Parliaments need to guarantee the representation of neglected groups, including ethnic and religious groups, women and youth. Inclusiveness requires parliaments to involve civil society in their decision-making processes in order to build trust among the general public and to ensure representation of a variety of needs;

(c) Given their law-making function, parliaments can take a number of measures to strengthen national institutions, namely:

(i) Establish a legal framework to create a level playing field for political parties during and between election cycles. Effective party-financing laws that ensure a fair distribution of funds are also important;

(ii) Develop a legal framework that prevents the existence of political parties that are purely identity-based and, concurrently, encourages the development of political party platforms;[5]

(iii) Create a legal framework to ensure that each political party receives fair media coverage;

[5] Kenya, for example, passed a Political Parties Act that requires each political party to have a minimum of 1,000 members from at least 50 per cent of the country's counties (24 of 47 counties).

(iv) Set up an independent judicial system in order, inter alia, to ensure the equality of all before the law;

(v) Develop standing orders that help to promote dialogue among the political parties represented in parliament. Such standing orders are not limited to but should include the right to ask questions of the executive and contribute to the debate in plenary. Furthermore, a consensus on befitting conduct within the parliamentary setting should be reached.

> However much the United Nations can do to promote peace in conflict-ridden countries, success ultimately depends on strong national leadership and strong national commitment to reconciliation reform. That leadership and commitment often emanates from parliament.
>
> Jan Eliasson
> Deputy Secretary-General

Box 2
Challenges to parliamentary involvement in conflict management

Parliaments can fulfil their potential for building more stable societies only if they are strong institutions. Most parliaments in unstable societies face a number of challenges. All too often, parliamentarians lack the requisite knowledge and skills and an understanding of the issues they are dealing with. Many issues, especially economic and fiscal matters, are highly complex and cannot be adequately addressed by parliamentarians without stronger resources and human capacities, including computers, research libraries and staff and office space.

Many parliamentarians are not independent of the executive branch. Without independence, parliaments are unable to effectively oversee executive action in order to ensure the implementation of settlement agreements and important issues, such as effective development policies and the fair redistribution of resources. Parliamentary independence is compromised by a number of factors, including lack of control over internal budgets and resources and lack of immunity.

IV. Cooperation between the United Nations and other international and regional organizations

32. Cooperation with other regional or international organizations is essential to the success of the United Nations in conflict and post-conflict settings. However, in order for cooperation between the United Nations and other organizations to yield positive results, it needs to be effectively coordinated, and resources have to be rationalized and accountability shared. Furthermore, it is crucial for the international community to project a united front and not appear disjointed. If the different

international players seem to be at odds with one another, the different parties to the conflict will attempt to "forum shop", i.e., try to gain support from more sympathetic organizations, which, in turn, is likely to prolong the conflict.

33. Cooperation with regional organizations can be beneficial because they may have a better understanding of the complexities of the conflict. Regional organizations may also add to the legitimacy of the intervention. A good example of effective cooperation between international and regional organizations is in Guinea, where the United Nations worked in tandem with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to help contain an outbreak of electoral violence. The United Nations provided ECOWAS with the good offices of the Secretary-General in order to give broad legitimacy to the effort.

34. Cooperation with international organizations can be effective if the organization has established expertise in a specific area. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, for example, has years of experience in technical support aimed at strengthening parliament as an institution. It has established relations with parliaments around the world, which allows it to draw from experiences and examples of best practice in building parliamentary capacities. It has shown that capacity-building is most effective in cases where a holistic institutional approach is taken at the request of the parliament and with its input from the outset.

Recommendations

35. The recommendations are as follows:

(a) Any cooperation between the United Nations and regional or other organizations must avoid overlap. Organizations need to rationalize resources and share accountability;

(b) The Inter-Parliamentary Union has established relationships with parliaments around the world and is well equipped to help share good practices. Thus, the United Nations should work more closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in order to build the capacity of parliaments that request assistance, strengthen the rule of law and help bring national legislation in line with international commitments;

(c) The Inter-Parliamentary Union should continue to build a bridge between parliaments and the United Nations. The annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations is one of the possible forums to allow parliaments to gain a better understanding of United Nations processes and to be included in the deliberations.

V. Role of women

36. Conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding can be effective only if women are included in decision-making at every stage. As established by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), women need to play an important role in the management of disputes and in peacebuilding processes. Yet 12 years on, much remains to be done at both the national and international levels to bring about gender equality in this domain. As a result, women and children continue to be disproportionately affected by conflict and remain voiceless in decision-making processes that have a direct impact on their lives.

37. By examining peace processes through the lens of gender equality, countries can undergo a structural transformation that builds more just and therefore more sustainable societies. Over the years, the United Nations has successfully implemented a number of measures to strengthen the role of women in all spheres of life. In Tajikistan, the United Nations has established legal aid centres for women, which were later taken over and expanded by the government.

> When the United Nations system works together as an integrated player we are not only able to bring attention to the issue but we actually find ways to address the issue.
>
> Saraswathi Menon
> Director, Policy Division, UN-Women

38. Strengthening the role of women is crucial to achieving long-term stability through more inclusive societies. For example, when women are placed at the centre of service delivery, such as in Liberia and Rwanda, they are able to take care of not only their families, but also their communities, which puts the country on a far more inclusive path of development.

39. The United Nations needs to act as a model for including women in decision-making processes. Despite its many commitments and clear evidence of the impact of women on achieving stable peace, the role of women in conflict prevention and peace negotiations remains minute. Only 9 per cent of negotiators have been women, and there has never been a female United Nations-appointed chief mediator.

40. Parliaments as institutions can also help to strengthen the role of women. They can work towards achieving gender parity in representation by implementing quota systems and sensitizing the general public to the idea of women decision makers. However, inclusiveness must not be limited to numbers alone, but must also address qualitative issues. To that end, parliaments can take measures to ensure that women can run for office and participate effectively in parliamentary proceedings. Such measures include but are not limited to capacity-building through education and the scheduling of meetings to afford women greater flexibility to balance their work and family responsibilities.

Recommendations

41. The recommendations are as follows:

(a) The United Nations needs to live up to its commitment to involve women more in the decision-making processes. This includes appointing women to chief negotiator roles;

(b) Parliaments need to include women. Inclusiveness, however, is not only about numbers, it must also be expanded to include accessibility through capacity-building and measures that enable women to work effectively in the parliamentary setting.

Annex I

Overview of themes discussed and participants

1. During the opening session, the audience was addressed by Abdelwahad Radi (President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union), Rodney Charles (Vice-President of the General Assembly, Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations) and Jan Eliasson (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations).

2. The first segment of the hearing examined the three main themes, namely, conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding, which were discussed by Ranko Vilović (Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations and Vice-Chair, Peacebuilding Commission), Tayé-Brook Zerihoun (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs), Marta Ruedas (Deputy Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme), Saraswathi Menon (Director, Policy Division, UN-Women) and Pauline Baker (president emeritus, The Fund for Peace).

3. The second segment examined Kenya's efforts in conflict prevention, which was discussed by Kenneth Marende (Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya), Mélégué Traoré (Member of Parliament, Burkina Faso) and Peter Gastrow (Director of Programmes and Senior Fellow, International Peace Institute).

4. The third segment assessed Sierra Leone's approach to reconciliation, which was debated by Edward Amin Soloku (former member of parliament, Sierra Leone), Shekou M. Touray (Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations), Eloho Ejeviome Otobo (Director and Deputy Head, Peacebuilding Support Office) and Lansana Gberie (Research Analyst, Security Council Report).

5. The fourth segment focused on the role of international organizations in peacebuilding, which was discussed by Guillaume Kigbafori Soro (President of the National Assembly, Côte d'Ivoire) and Anders B. Johnsson (Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union).

6. Lastly, the question of whether a more inclusive Security Council would likely lead to greater global stability was discussed, in the format of Doha debates popularized by the BBC, by Patrice Martin-Lalande (National Assembly of France, Member of the Advisory Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Committee on United Nations Affairs), Hardeep Singh Puri (Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations), Eduardo Ulibarri (Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations) and Hans Corell (former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and Legal Counsel).

Annex II

Summary of group discussions

In the course of the meeting, a number of small group discussions were held to provide participants with an opportunity to focus on specific questions. A list of questions that were discussed (one question per group) and the corresponding answers are provided below.

What mechanisms can enhance cooperation among political parties?

- Basic rules: freedom to create political parties; acceptance of the role of the opposition
- Procedure: parliamentarians should have the right to ask questions; there should be time limits; members of parliament should enjoy immunity in the performance of their duties
- Political party financing should allow political parties to function properly at all times, not only during the election cycle
- The executive should engage with political party leaders on a regular basis
- There should be a consensus on conduct befitting the parliament

What are the conditions for effective parliamentary involvement in conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding?

- Parliaments should be representative of the entire society, including all ethnic groups
- Parliament should be legitimate (free and fair elections, etc.)
- Parliament should be involved in dialogue with the executive
- Parliament has to be respected and respectable (integrity)
- Parliament should have the requisite capacities
- Parliamentarians have to conduct frequent outreach activities in their constituencies
- The impact of parliaments in the prevention and resolution of conflicts needs to be evaluated more frequently

Women and long-term stability?

- Men should be supportive of women's issues and their role in conflict prevention and resolution
- Women must be empowered to participate in the political process; women's representation in office should be at least 30 per cent and aim for parity
- The impact of conflict on women and children should be assessed (measures need to be taken to ensure that women will not be victimized)

How can the United Nations more effectively prevent conflict, and how can it more effectively engage parliaments in its peacebuilding work?

- The United Nations needs a clear mandate with clear aims accepted by all stakeholders
- Building the capacity of State institutions, including and especially parliament (strengthening the independence of parliament)
- State institutions have to share information with the United Nations
- The United Nations needs to strengthen cooperation with regional organizations
- The composition of the Security Council has to be more representative in order to command more authority
- The United Nations needs to work with the Bretton Woods institutions and other organizations in order to pursue a common approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding
- Greater input from non-governmental organizations can help inform United Nations interventions. However, such organizations must comply with strict transparency and accountability standards
- The United Nations should work with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in assisting parliaments that request assistance

How can post-conflict society achieve just and inclusive reconciliation?

Preconditions

- Involvement of all actors and acceptance of each other
- Mutual tolerance
- Existence of neutral arbitration
- Identification of real root causes

Measures

- Strengthening institutional mechanisms, inter alia, through a representative and credible parliament, as well as an independent judiciary
- Economic mechanisms that allow for the equitable redistribution of wealth, including among women, minorities and youth
- Provision of basic social needs (education, health, jobs, etc.)
- Greater involvement of women in national issues, particularly through access to education and better representation in decision-making bodies
- Establishment of representative movements
- Existence of plural and professional media, which gives equitable access to all (media to be responsible)
- Sharing of political power and processes
- Building civil society in order to ensure greater participation

- Civic education
- Application of the rule of law; equality of all before the law
- Truth and reconciliation commissions

How can regional cooperation support national political stability?

- Cooperation must avoid overlap, rationalize the use of resources and share accountability
- Organizations must help to strengthen parliament, especially in transition countries
- The Inter-Parliamentary Union must be encouraged to continue to build a bridge between parliaments and the United Nations